

"IT IS NOT SUPER PEOPLE WE WANT; WHAT WE NEED IS MORE AVERAGE DEVELOPMENT"

BY HERBERT QUICK

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"Eugenics" is the science of breeding human beings. It is the fashion, just now. It is commanding the attention of many real thinkers and a host of people who only think they think. And it is the occasion of more uttered imbecility than any topic now discussed.

Defined in one very narrow way, eugenics is a very minor title in the science of criminology. In a little broader way, it is a good subject for people to study before marriage. In a still deeper aspect, it is the mental breakfast food of half-baked amateurs and crazy scientists.

For scientists are quite likely to go crazy as other people. When they do, we get from them elixirs of life, old-age microbe philosophy, and social uplift for eugenics.

One great scientist whose work in many lines has been fine has developed the notion that by the selection of exceptional couples for breeding purposes an increase of the number of very talented people could be promoted.

That notion is perfectly absurd, even if Sir Francis Galton did put it forth. His selected individuals would, in all probability, not love each other, or, if they did, would be more or less unfruitful. Robert and Elizabeth Browning were two geniuses. How many know whether they had children? And the ordinary reference books do not disclose the fate of Robert Wiedemann Barrett Browning, their only child, so unimportant was he. Where are the Dickenses, the Longfellowes, the Shakespeares, the Washingtons, the Shelleys and the Miltons?

If the breeding of human beings could be carried on with as much certainty as that of animals, by mating superior men and women as superior ewes and rams are mated, the thing

would still be impossible. We have pedigrees of the live-stock, but none of the people. Our genealogies throw no light whatever on the real quality of the blood lines of any people or any family on earth. And it is a well-established fact of breeding that "mass selection" produces no results.

"Mass selection" means the breeding from the best individuals without reference to their religious pedigree. And we have no human pedigrees based on talent or excellence, physical or mental. "Mass selection" is the only sort Sir Francis Galton could have used, and it has been shown by Dr. Raymond Pearl and others that mass selection does no good. The offspring take back to the general level of their ancestry.

If this thing could be done, it would be a bad thing. We have plenty of very talented people now. What we need is more average development. And the superexcellence of human beings cannot be generally transmitted, because of our morals and our souls. The superior male animal may be so used as to do this, and the inferior males killed off—and this is the only way; but not so with the human being. If Galton's scheme could be carried out, it would withdraw the best stock from the general population and segregate it in a small group of supermen. The mass would lose all that the group would gain. And it is the mass which is important in a world going over wholly to democracy. Galton's proposition is impossible as to its practical breeding problems, and undesirable if it were possible.

Dr. Waters of the Kansas Agricultural College has taken pure-bred beef cattle and made scrubs of them in one generation. He did it by the same operation that makes scrubs of